

Lecture September 15, 1988  
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Statement of  
By  
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Surgeon General  
Of the  
U.S. Public Health Service  
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
  
Before Press Conference  
With  
Senator Bradley and Dr. Mats  
The Capitol  
On  
Bradley's Bill For a Label on Cigarette Packages  
And Advertising Concerning Addiction  
Washington, DC  
September 15, 1988

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This very short statement is included in this archive really to emphasize something in the "tobacco wars" that was never part of a specific lecture. The Public Health Service had planned to get rid of the old timeworn Surgeon General's warning: "The Surgeon General has determined that smoking is detrimental to your health". We planned to replace it with 5 different labels that would rotate so the same label would not appear on the same advertisement or the same cigarette package for more than 3 months in a row.

As soon as the tobacco industry found that this was in the Public Health Service plans, they made it very clear that they would fight to the death not to have new rotating labels. Before the fight really got started word trickled down to us that if we would drop one of the five labels they would give us no trouble on the other four. The one they wanted us to drop was: "Tobacco contains nicotine which is an addictive drug".

Addiction was one word that the tobacco industry never wanted to have associated with tobacco period. In those days if you asked a room full of smokers how many of them were addicted to nicotine, no hands would go up. Today the same question would get about an 80% response positive for addiction. So a political compromise was made. We would offer four labels instead of five and drop the fifth label. The statement contained herein was by me on the occasion that Senator Bradley had a press conference announcing that he was going to submit legislation to include another label on cigarette packages advertising concerning addiction. It never happened.

The statement was brief and I recalled to mind the publication of "The Health Consequences of Smoking: Nicotine Addiction", which had been the 1988 Report to Congress as mandated by law. I emphasized the three overall conclusions of the Report

which appear on page 2 of the statement. I then stated that we needed to increase our efforts to discourage tobacco use especially now that we recognize nicotine as an addictive drug. After noting how many ways we could call attention in educational campaigns to the addictive nature of tobacco, I closed with reminding the audience of the annual death toll in the United States and suggested that with our nation having mobilized enormous resources to wage a war on drugs...illicit drugs, we should give priority to the one addiction that is killing more Americans each year than any other single cause – nicotine.